

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9858

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

S E C R E T GUATEMALA 0664

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GT, US

SUBJ: CURRENT GUATEMALAN PERCEPTION OF THE US

REF: STATE 010605

1. BEFORE REPLY POINT BY POINT TO THE ISSUES RAISED IN
REFTEL IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO BRIEFLY LIST A FEW FACTORS THAT
HELP TO SHAPE GUATEMALA'S PERCEPTION OF AMERICA'S POSTURE
IN THE WORLD TODAY AND OF THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENTS ON THE
WORLD SCENE AND WITHIN THE UNITED STATES ON THAT POSTURE.

2. THE FIRST OF THESE IS GUATEMALA'S PERCEPTION OF ITSELF
AS FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN THE ANTI-COMMUNIST WESTERN WORLD.
THIS IS REFLECTED DOMESTICALLY IN A BODY POLITIC THAT IS
CONSIDERABLY MORE CONSERVATIVE THAN THAT OF THE U.S.

3. THE SECOND FACTOR IS THAT GUATEMALA HAS ONLY A LIMITED
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AREA OF INTEREST IN WORLD AFFAIRS. ITS ATTENTION IS FOCUSED

ON DEVELOPMENTS FROM THE U.S. IN THE NORTH TO PANAMA IN THE SOUTH, INCLUDING THE WESTERN CARIBBEAN, ESPECIALLY CUA. WIRE SERVICE NEWS OF THE WORLD BEYOND THIS AREA IS CARRIED IN THE GUATEMALAN PRESS BUT IS ONLY OF MARGINAL INTEREST TO BOTH THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND THE EDUCATED MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASSES.

4. THE THIRD FACTOR, AND THIS IS ONLY A QUALIFICATION OF THE SECOND POINT ABOVE, IS THAT ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS ANYWHERE THAT CAN AFFECT THE BELIZE QUATION IS IMPOR- TNAT TO GUATEMALA.

5. THE RESPONSES BELOW ARE KEYED TO THE CABLE'S QUESTIONS.

A. THE UNITED STATES IS STILL SEEN BY GUATEMALAN AS THE MOST POWERFUL AND IMPORTANT COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY, AND MILITARILY, AND THE COUNTRY WHOSE POLICIES WILL HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON THE LOCAL SCENE.

THE UNSUCCESSFUL END OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM HAD ITS MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AMONG THE GUATEMALAN MILITARY. VIET NAME WAS TOO FAR AWAY TO BE OF MUCH INTEREST IN ITSELF, BUT THE MILITARY WERE UPSET THAT THE U.S. MILITARY, ON WHOM GUATEMALAN ARMY ORGANIZATION, TACTICS AND TRAINING ARE MODELED, AND WHO ARE REGARDED AS THE ULTIMATE SECURITY SHIELD FOR GUATEMALA, SHOULD ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE DEFEATED ANYWHERE. WE BELIEVE THIS SEEING ON THE PART OF THE ARMY TO BECOME LESS DEPENDENT ON THE U.S.

WATERGATE DID NOT HAVE MUCH OF AN IMPACT EXCEPT THAT GUATEMALANS PROBABLY HAD SOME DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING WHY NIXON WAS BEING ATTACKED FOR ACTION THAT BY GUATEMALAN STANDARDS WERE NOT WORTH MENTIONING. THERE MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN, AMONG THE EDUCATED CLASSES, SOME CONCERN THAT THE WATERGATE AFFAIR COULD WEAKEN THE POWER OF THE PRESIDENCY AND THUS ITS ABILITY TO TAKE QUICK, DECISIVE ACTION WHEN NEEDED.

THE CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE CIA AND ITS ROLE IN CHILE HAVE PROMPTED LITTLE NOTICEABLE REACTION, BUT ONE CAN SURMISE THAT WHAT IMPACT THERE HAS BEEN WAS ONE OF PUZZLEMENT AND SOME CONERN- PUZZLEMENT THAT

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THE U.S. WOULD PUBLICIZE THIS TYPE OF ACITIVITY AND CONCERN THAT THE REVELATION COULD HINDER SIMILAR U.S. ACTION IN THE FUTURE. ONE MUST REMEMBER THAT GUATEMAL'S GOVERNMENT TODAY IS INDIRECTLY DESCENDED FROM THE CIA SPNSORED CASTILLO ARMAS COUP AGAINST ARBENZ IN 1954(VICE-PRESIDENT MARIO SANDOVAL PARTICI- PATED IN THAT COUP) AND MOST GUATEMALANS WERE ANYTHING BUT UPSET BY THE OVERTHROW OF ALLENDE.

B. NOT IN GENERAL, BUT THERE IS SOME DOUBT, ESPECIALLY IN THE MILITARY, ABOUT OUR WILLINGNESS TO UNDERTAKE MILITARY ACTION ON BEHALF OF OUR ALLIES' INTERESTS.

C. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS HAVE HAD AN IMPACT WITHIN INFLUENTIAL CIRCLES ON THEIR CONFIDENCE IN U.S. WILLINGNESS TO MEET ITS COMMITMENTS. GUATEMALA'S CONCERN HERE IS THAT CUBA, POSSIBLY WITH OTHER CARIBBEAN NATIONS' SUPPORT, MIGHT INTERVENE EITHER OVERTLY OR COVERTLY IN BELIZE. A FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER RECENTLY TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT SENATE EMASCULATION OF THE EXECUTIVE(E.G., ANGOLA) HAS REDUCED U.S. CREDIBILITY TO ZERO. MANY OTHERS, ALBEIT IN LESS EXTREME TERMS, PROBABLY SHARE THIS SAME CONCERN.

WHILE THIS PROBLEM HAS NOT AFFECTED GUATEMALA'S WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WITH THE U.S., IT CAN ONLY INCREASE GUATEMALA'S DETERMINATION TO RESOLVE THE BELIZE DISPUTE IN A WAY THAT WOULD MINIMIZE GOG DEPENDENCE ON THE U.S. TO PREVENT CUBAN INTERVENTION.

D. THERE IS ONLY A FAIR UNDERSTANDING WITHIN THE GUATEMALAN GOVERNMENT OF THE U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS AND PARTICULARLY OF THE POWERFUL ROLE OF THE CONGRESS. FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA HAS DONE POST-GRADUATE WORK AT COLUMBIA AND TAUGHT INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA. HOWEVER, WHILE THE SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE MILITARY INCLUDING GENERAL LAUGERUD HAVE ALL RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE TRAINING IN THE U.S. AND THEREBY BEEN AT LEAST EXPOSED TO THE U.S. SCENE, IT IS QUESTIONNABLE HOW WELL THEY UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF THE CONGRESS. THE EMBASSY IS UNAWARE OF ANY BELIEF THAT THE EXECUTIVE IS NOT SINCERE IN ITS

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ATTEMPTS TO PASS FOREIGN POLICY LEGISLATION AFFECTING LATIN AMERICA.

E. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS THERE HAS BEEN A SLIGHT CHANGE WITHIN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES IN GUATEMALA'S TRADITIONAL VIEW OF THE U.S., BUT THIS HAS BEEN THE DIRECT RESULT OF THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT AT U.S. UNWILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT THEM ON BLIZE AND THEIR BELIEF THAT THEIR VERY CLOSE TIES WITH THE U.S. COST THEM THE VOTES OF MANY NON-ALIGNED NATIONS ON THE BELIZE VOTE IN THE UNGA. ACCORDINGLY, WHILE REMAINING FIRMLY WITHIN THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CAMP, GUATEMAL MAY VOTE MORE WITH THE ASIANS AND AFRICANS ON ISSUES THAT DO NOT DIRECTLY AFFECT ITS OWN NATIONAL INTEREST. GUATEMALA MAY CONTINUE ITS RECENT EFFORTS TO DIVERSIFY

SOMEWHAT THE SOURCES OF ITS MILITARY EQUIPMENT BECAUSE OF RECENT U.S. UNWILLINGNESS TO APPROVE SALE OF CERTAIN MILITARY ITEMS WHILE TENSIONS WERE HIGH OVER BELIZE. HOWEVER, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT U.S. -GUATEMALAN BILATERAL POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC RELATIONS WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED.

F. INFLUENTIAL GUATEMALANS HAVE BEEN CONCERNED FOR SOME TIME ABOUT THE DANGER OF CUBA USING AN INDEPENDENT BELIZE TO INTERVENE IN GUATEMALA. CUBA'S RECENTLY DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO INTERVENE SEVERAL THOUSAND MILES AWAY IN FORCE HAS INCREASED THEIR APPREHENSIONS. AS STATED IN "C" ABOVE WHAT CONCERNS GUATEMALANS ABOUT AMERICA'S UNWILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE ITS INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA IS FEAR THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD SIMILARLY BE PREVENTED BY CONGRESS FROM STOPPING CUBAN OVERT OR COVERT INTERVENTION IN BELIZE OR ELSEWHERE IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

G. WHILE GUATEMALA HAS BEEN WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR WHATEVER BENEFIT GUATEMALA MAY OBTAIN, THEY ARE NOT SEEN AS SUBSTITUTES FOR GUATEMALA'S CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

H. SEE "E"

I. WHILE GUATEMALA MAY TAKE A SLIGHTLY MORE INDEPENDENT
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STANCE IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS, IT STILL VIEWS THE U.S. AS ITS MOST IMPORTANT ALLY AND TRADING PARTNER. ACCORDINGLY, NO ECONOMIC IMPACT IS ANTICIPATED.

J. THE FACT THAT THE U.S. HAS AN ACTIVE AID PROGRAM IN GUATEMALA IS ALL THAT CONCERNS GUATEMALA. THE SIZE OF OUR AID PROGRAM ELSEWHERE IS OF VERY LIMITED INTEREST.
ANDREWS

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